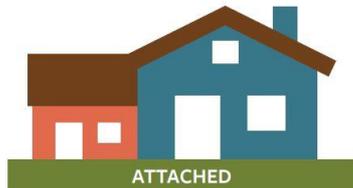
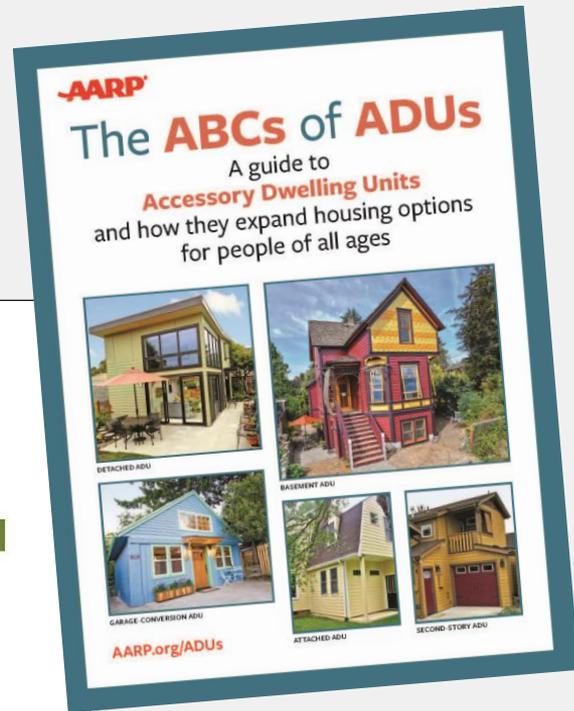


# The ABCs of ADUs

A guide to Accessory Dwelling Units and how they expand housing options for people of all ages



▲ Accessory dwelling units (or ADUs) come in many shapes and styles.



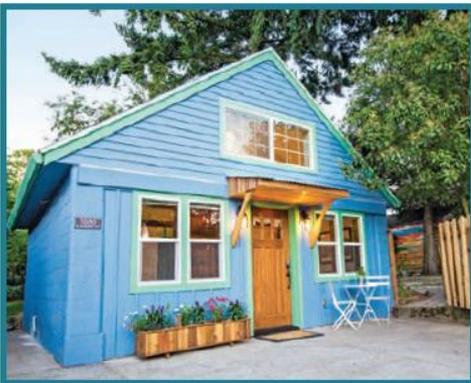
Find this publication and more:  
[AARP.org/ADUs](https://www.aarp.org/ADUs)

# Welcome! Come On In!

As small homes or apartments that exist on the same property as a single-family residence, accessory dwelling units — or ADUs — are a needed housing option for people of all ages.



DETACHED ADU



GARAGE-CONVERSION ADU



BASEMENT ADU



ATTACHED ADU



SECOND-STORY ADU

[AARP.org/ADUs](https://www.aarp.org/adus)

# An ADU is ...

- a small residence that shares a single-family lot with a larger, primary dwelling
- an independent, self-contained living space with its own kitchen or kitchenette, bathroom and sleeping area



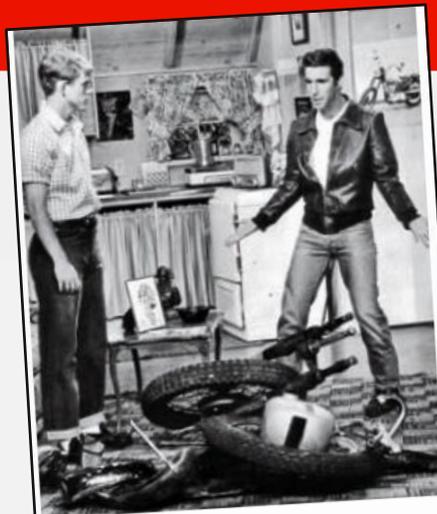
▲ A detached ADU

- An ADU can be located **within**, **attached to** or **detached from** the main residence. It can be created out of an existing structure (such as a garage) or built anew.
- Because an ADU exists on a single-family lot as a secondary dwelling, it typically cannot be sold separately from the primary residence.

# The Benefits of ADUs

- An ADU can enable family members (including family caregivers) to reside on the same property while having their own living spaces.
- An ADU can provide housing for a hired caregiver.
- An ADU can provide rental income to homeowners.
- An ADU can be a practical option for tenants seeking small, affordably priced rental housing.
- An ADU can help older residents remain independent and age in place.

Find the complete list, Fonzie and more in *The ABCs of ADUs*.



▲ Accessory dwelling units show up in neighborhoods throughout the country — and even in pop culture. One example: In the sitcom *Happy Days*, Fonzie (right) rents an above-garage ADU from the Cunningham family in 1950s-era Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Although many people have never heard the term, **Accessory Dwelling Units** have been around for centuries and are identified by many different names.

See page 6 of *The ABCs of ADUs* for a history lesson about ADUs.

## Other names for an ADU...

- accessory apartment
- backyard bungalow
- basement apartment
- casita
- carriage house
- coach house
- English basement
- garage apartment
- granny flat
- guest cottage
- guest house
- in-law suite
- laneway house
- multi-generational house
- ohana unit
- secondary dwelling unit



PHOTO: SARAH DALE FOR AARP

# ADUs Are Community-Compatible

- ADUs offer a way to include smaller, relatively affordable homes in established neighborhoods with minimal visual impact and without adding to an area's sprawl.
- ADUs provide a more dispersed and incremental way of adding homes to a community than other options, such as multistory apartment buildings.
- ADUs are typically managed by homeowners who live on the premises. Such landlords are less likely to tolerate a destructive tenant.

## Big houses are being built, small houses are needed

Do we really need more than three times as much living space per person as we did in 1950? Can we afford to buy or rent, heat, cool and care for such large homes?

YEAR	1950	2020
Median square footage of new single-family homes	983	2,261
Number of people per household	3.8	2.5
Square feet of living space per person	292	904

**FACT:** ADUs house more people per square foot of living area than single-family homes do.

SOURCE: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

**Reminder:** Since ADUs are custom designed and created, they're able to fit discreetly into all sorts of locations, including suburban subdivisions, walkable towns, urban neighborhoods — and, of course, large lots and rural regions.

# ADUs Benefit People and Places

## ADUs house people of all ages

- ADUs offer **young people** entry-level housing choices.
- ADUs enable **families** to live together yet apart.
- ADUs provide **empty nesters** and other homeowners with the option of moving into a smaller space while renting their larger house or letting an adult child reside in it.

An ADU's use can be adapted for different household types, income levels, employment situations and life stages.



▲ ADUs are created by single-family homeowners within their home, as an addition to their home, or as a detached unit on their property. In this image, the path at left leads to an attached ADU built off the back of the home. The homeowners reside in the original house. Their daughter, who is their caregiver, lives in the ADU.

**Communities that understand the benefits of ADUs allow homeowners to create them.**

## According to the **AARP Home and Community Preferences Survey**, people who would consider creating an ADU said they would do so in order to:

- Provide a home for a loved one in need of care (86%)
- Provide housing for relatives or friends (86%)
- Have a space for guests (82%)
- Create a place for a caregiver to stay (74%)
- Increase the value of their home (69%)
- Feel safer by having someone live nearby (67%)
- Earn extra income by renting to a tenant (63%)

Source: 2021 AARP Home and Community Preferences Survey, AARP Research



# ADU Rules and Regulations

- There are more than 19,000 cities, 16,000 towns and 3,000 counties in the United States.
- ADU regulations are typically adopted at the local level, although several state legislatures have passed laws requiring communities to allow them.



PHOTO: MELISSA STANTON, AARP

## A Zoning Code Example

In Brevard County, North Carolina, ADUs are referred to as “secondary dwelling units.” The local zoning code states that such homes “shall be encouraged and designed to meet housing needs” and that the “units shall be accessory and subordinate to the primary living quarters.”

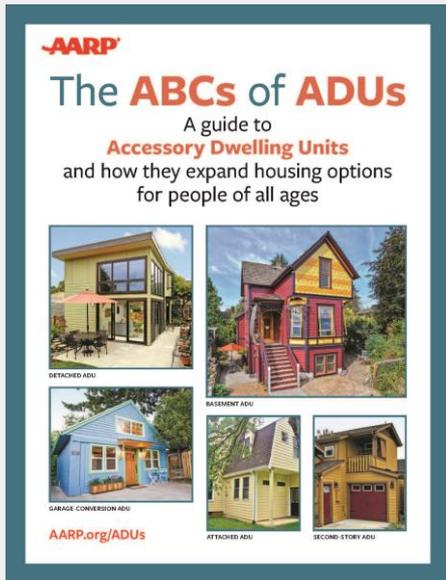
◀ A detached above-garage ADU

**Among the places with statewide or local laws that encourage the creation of ADUs:**

Arizona, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, New Hampshire, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington, D.C.

# AARP and Accessory Dwelling Units

Visit [AARP.org/ADU](https://www.aarp.org/ADU) to order or download our free publications and find more resources about ADUs.



## Free ADU Publications from AARP

- *The ABCs of ADUs*
- *Accessory Dwelling Units: A Step-by-Step Guide to Design and Development*
- *Expanding ADU Development: Solutions for Removing Local Barriers to ADU Construction*
- *Accessory Dwelling Units: Model State Act and Local Ordinance*

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